



# Far East Star

Spring 2023

## *From the Desk of the Delegation Superior...*

Brad Rozairo OMI

Dear Brothers,

Happy Easter!

I wish that the renewal of life at Easter may bring new blessings of peace, hope, love, good health and happiness to you and your family and friends.

After the cold winter here in Kochi, a city on the island of Shikoku, we are experiencing some warm air. In the mornings, I hear a bird singing outside my room and plants that looked dead come back to life as cherry blossoms in the vicinity mark the arrival of spring - a great time for *transformation* and *a new beginning*. When nature invites us to reflect on the process of personal and spiritual transformation all around us, Easter, which we have just celebrated, offers us an opportunity for a new beginning once again.

This year, we celebrate 75 years of Oblate presence in Japan. We might call this a milestone in the history of our Delegation, but it is also an invitation to *begin anew*. With the dwindling numbers in the mission, we might wonder whether starting again is possible. It might not be easy, but it is possible,



provided we put to death our old self and living patterns and habits that might have made us remain stagnant for many years. If we believe that Easter is about experiencing hope of the resurrection, I think despite the challenges we may face, we will find a way to come out of stagnancy and embrace the new life promised by our Lord.



God has been so good and generous to us during these many years of our life and labour in Japan. Therefore, as we prepare internally and externally to celebrate not achievements but our humble beginnings, let us have the humility to accept our faults and weaknesses. And, let us have the courage to trust in God's providence and recommit ourselves while looking forward to a new beginning with a renewed heart, mind and spirit.

## WELCOME TO JAPAN

We warmly welcome our Provincial Fr. Roshan Silva OMI



And, a new member of our Delegation Fr. Tharanga N. Perera OMI



## An Oblate on a Mission in Japan...

**Brad Rozairo OMI**

In our mission parishes, we have got a good number of young Vietnamese technical interns, who make a big difference through their presence and participation in liturgy and other activities. Wherever they go, they give witness to God's love and their actions attract the Japanese Catholics. But for them, life in Japan is not very easy. They yearn for acceptance, understanding and company in times of hardship in life.

Therefore, feeling the need to nurture their faith during the Holy season of Lent and to give them strength and confidence to stand life's challenges, we decided to invite an Oblate from Vietnam. Fr. Joseph DINH Kim Chi responded to our invitation and was with us for two weeks. He preached two retreats during the weekends in Shikoku and Kita-Kyushu and was busy taking care of the spiritual needs of the Vietnamese. He also took time to visit the Oblate missions and some significant places.

Dear Fr. Kim Chi, we would like to say in Japanese お疲れ様でした (OTSUKARESAMA DESHITA) - meaning, THANK YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK. We hope you enjoyed your short stay with us and the Japanese hospitality. We wish you all the very best for your ministry in Vietnam. We also thank the Mission Superior of Vietnam for sending you on a mission to Japan.



### **We are happy to share a few voices of the retreat participants:**

#### **Participant A:**

It felt so familiar, sitting in the middle of the community, hearing and understanding the meaning of Mass. It has been a long time since I heard the preaching of a Vietnamese priest, and I was touched by the good news. It was a beautiful celebration of the Holy Eucharist. I received the sacraments of Reconciliation, and the Holy Communion and sang with my friends some familiar songs in Vietnamese. I felt that we had not been forgotten and were loved much my God. Thanks to Fr. Joseph Kim Chi OMI, a fervent spiritual man, for preaching the Lent retreat. I hope we will have occasions of this nature in the future too.



#### **Participant B:**

I thank God for the opportunity given to me to participate in the Lenten retreat that helped me know more about God's grace and mercy. Our retreat preacher Fr Joseph Kim Chi OMI spoke about the meaning of Lent and how to live it meaningfully and in a synodal way. The four aspects he introduced were: *repentance*, *fasting*, *prayer*, and *doing charity*. Our Master Jesus, helps us walk the spiritual journey of Lent.



The words of Fr Joseph, "*Face the Lord and look up to the glory of the Lord* " touched me and they pierced my heart. I believe that by understanding the original meaning of Lent within me, I will be able to serve God better and deepen my faith. So, I will continue to work hard every day.

**Participant C:**

I thank Fr. Kim Chi for his meaningful retreat talk through which, I not only reviewed my Catechism or understood more about the metaphorical meanings in the Gospels but also understood the meaning of Lent and the right way of living this season.

Fr. Chi began his talk by explaining the purpose of the retreat, which made me realize that a retreat is not so much to repent but to feel the glory and the presence of God within me. He used the Gospel passage about the transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor. In addition, he also reminded me of the threefold description in my call as a Christian and the importance of sharing in the mission of the church, which is the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ. In his homily, he spoke about the meaning of the number 40 mentioned in the Bible and its connection to Lent and the importance of penance, fasting, prayer, and the works of charity.

Thanks to Fr. Chi, I have never felt that becoming a saint is not an impossible task, and I am also called to become a saint so strongly. Saints are not people who live holy and pious lives, but people who experience God's love. Therefore, as long as we keep in touch with God through daily prayer we remember God's presence and His love.

**Participant D:**

My sharing is not about the retreat, but about my experience in Naruto Oblate Community. Since childhood, I have enjoyed reading about the lives of saints such as Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, Saint Mariam, Saint Paulina, etc. In addition, I thought saints were very holy people and constantly united with God by the hardships of their religious life. According to my understanding, monastic life or life in a religious house is very harsh, challenging, very dry and cold because the members must always keep to the rules and stay united with God.

However, I have been going to Saturday evening mass in Naruto, where I happened to meet and speak to the Oblates and made a visit to their community. My visit completely changed my perception of the religious life and life of priests. For example, when Fr Kim Chi OMI, from Vietnam, arrived at this community, he was welcomed and treated like one of their brothers. Fr Inui, who is Japanese did not hesitate to give Fr Chi a warm welcoming hug. Perhaps for many of you, this may be a very ordinary image or a natural thing to do among religious and priests, but for me, this is a most beautiful gesture that I will never forget. Through their way of talking and living together, I felt the affection and connection between them that overcomes the gap in age and status. I thought to myself that perhaps between siblings, there wouldn't be such a close bond and mutual trust.

Thanks to this experience, I no longer think that the relationship between priests is cold and distant. This is an image that shows the love that transcends boundaries such as differences in culture, language, geographical distance and age. For me, the smile and warm affection between the priests not only changed my old conception of religious life but also witnessed the most valuable lesson about being in love with God which reflects in our life.



## Lent Retreat for the Vietnamese

**Steve Savarimuthu, OMI**



The Oblate Naruto Community was very happy to receive an Oblate from Vietnam, Fr. Joseph Kim Chi OMI, who came to preach the Lent retreat to Vietnamese youth in Oblate parishes. I would like to share with you a few events, memories and photos. Before the retreat, we took Fr. Chi to some Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in order for him to learn a little about Japanese culture. Since he practices Zen meditation and contemplation, Fr. Chi enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere of the temples and Japanese gardens.

The following day we took him to Oblate missions and kindergartens where he had a good time playing with the kids in a nearby park, followed by lunch together. The next day, two Vietnamese university students, who know Japanese well, joined us for Saturday morning Mass and breakfast. It had been a long time since they spoke with a Vietnamese priest and enjoyed a meal together. Then together, we visited a few sightseeing places in the area. During this time, it was a chance for the students to share with Fr. Chi their experiences and difficulties living in Japan. After work, other Vietnamese young people came to speak with Fr. Chi, sharing their struggles and the communication problems they face in the working place. On Sunday, after the Mass, the Japanese parishioners welcomed Fr. Chi by preparing a Japanese sticky rice cake in the traditional way. It was the first experience for him as well as for many Catholic Vietnamese students. They also got to know about the Oblate mission and ministry in Vietnam from Fr. Chi. It was an enriching experience for them and the parishioners.



Then in the afternoon we moved to another church where we planned a retreat for the Vietnamese youth. In the beginning, there were only 20, but later the number increased. Even though I did not understand Fr. Chi's talk, yet his interaction with the listeners made me admire the way he preached. Followed by the sacrament of reconciliation we had a Eucharistic celebration. After Mass, gathering in the hall, Fr. Chi explained how he came to know about the Oblate congregation. During this session, we had some singing, and various action songs. Some Vietnamese had to leave early because they lived very far from the church.



The fruitful day came to an end with dinner at a Vietnamese restaurant and much sharing from the heart which took place around the table. The young people were very happy to have had the opportunity to talk and spend time with a Vietnamese priest in a foreign land.



## “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt.25,35)

Maurizio Giorgianni, OMI

Greetings to all of you from Korea. I would like to share with you an experience of our pastoral care for the migrants.

Last January I received the news from the Philippines that Renato, a Filipino worker, died. Renato was working in Korea for 15 years. He was working in a factory that produces isothermal bags. I went to visit him a few times to see him working. In March 2022 during a check-up, he was found with a brain tumor. From that period on we became very close friends. During our trips back and forth to the hospital for more check-ups and cures, we shared many stories about our lives and I got to know him much better. Since he was an irregular worker, the bill for the cure was very expensive but thanks to the help of many people he received treatment in the hospital. Since the cure was long and he couldn't work anymore in Korea, in September I accompanied him to his family in the Philip-



pines. In the Philippines, he continued his treatment in a close hospital with our financial support but the result was not good and he died on January 5.

Of course, I was sad to hear the news and I recalled in my mind the time I spent with Renato during his sickness. In particular, I remember the time he was in the hospital for a brain operation for a biopsy. It was during the Covid period and I was his care giver.

The people in the same room were surprised to see an Italian taking care of a Filipino. Once someone asked him. “Is he your brother or someone from your family?”

Renato answered, “I am a Filipino...but my father is an Italian and my family is Korean”. I was surprised by his answer, which sounds like a joke, but I know that he was expressing his experience in Korea, especially during the last period of his life.

Renato was born Filipino but in Korea, he felt he had a father and a family. Even though he was alone, because his real family was in the Philippines, he felt that the love and the care of a father and the warmth and concern of a family were there. He felt the love of many Korean people, especially from the parish of Gwangju and many Catholics that were helping him financially to support the expenses of the treatment.



Even though he was a foreigner, he experienced faith in Jesus and the love of the Catholic community that helped him endure all the discrimination and difficulties that a migrant worker endures in Korea.

Sometimes when I hear that the migrant workers, especially the Catholics, are not well accepted by the Catholics in a parish, it makes me feel sad. How possible it is for people who share the same faith in Jesus and know the commandment of love can be discriminated against because of different countries and different social statuses? But for Renato it was not like that. The Korean Catholics made him feel that he was not a foreigner. This gave him the strength to go over physical and psychological difficulties. Perhaps, he expressed in words the love he experienced when he said, “I am a Filipino, but my father is an Italian and my family is Korean”.

Thanks to the Catholic community of Korea. I hope that in every parish in Korea and not only the migrants could say: “I am a foreigner, but my family is Korean, as “Jesus said, “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me”. (Mt. 25,35).

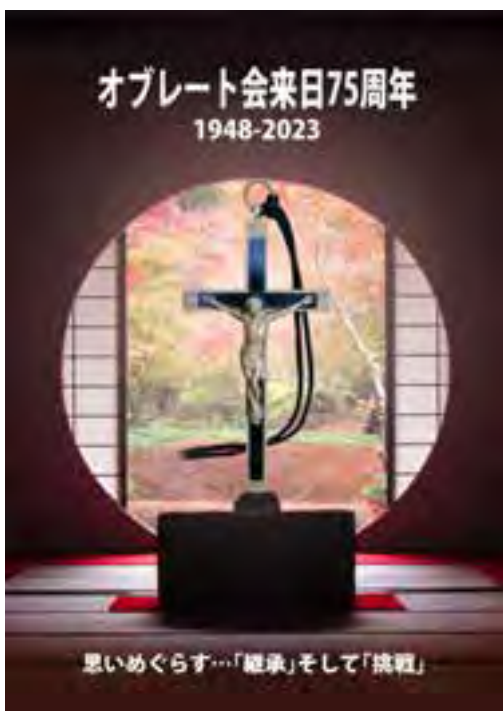


# AORC & AOTC JOINT MEETING IN BANGKOK: FEB. 26 – MAR. 4, 2023

Report: <https://www.omiworld.org/2023/03/14/aorc-meeting-held-in-bangkok/>

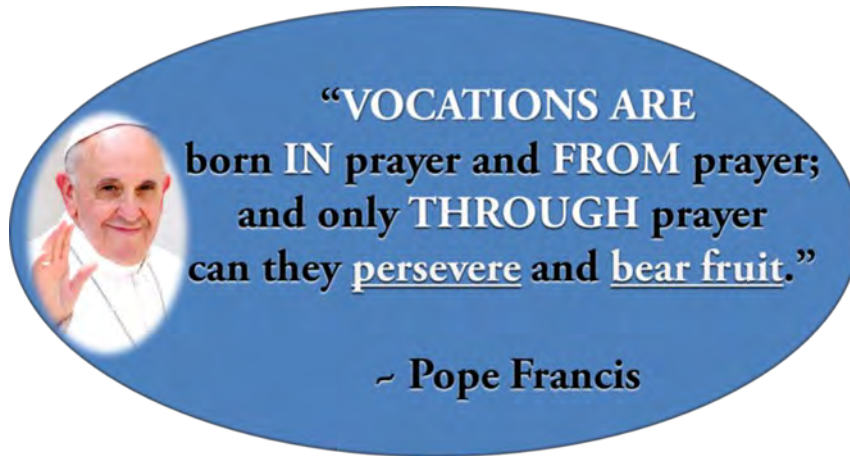


Poster; 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates in Japan



Pondering... “Inheritance” and “Challenge”

*A Week of Prayer for Oblate Vocations: **May 21 ~ 29, 2023***



*PRAYER FOR OBLATE VOCATIONS*

*Holy Father, we come to you because Jesus asked us to pray  
that you send workers into your harvest.*

*Therefore, send us generous young men, passionate for Jesus,  
willing to make of their whole life a total oblation to you,  
to become close to the poorest and most abandoned,  
and to proclaim the Gospel.*

*May they burn with the same fire that you enkindled in Saint Eugene;  
may they come to be part of his family*

*and, with all the Oblates, may they continue the work of Redemption.*

*Mary Immaculate, who first gave Jesus to the world, be with us as we pray.*